

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRIBAL AFFAIRS**

March 3, 2020

8:06 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Tiffany Zulkosky, Chair
Representative Bryce Edgmon, Vice Chair
Representative John Lincoln
Representative Chuck Kopp
Representative Dan Ortiz
Representative Dave Talerico

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Sarah Vance

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 287, "An Act requiring background investigations of village public safety officer applicants by the Department of Public Safety; relating to the village public safety officer program; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 287

SHORT TITLE: VILLAGE PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER GRANTS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) KOPP

02/24/20	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/24/20	(H)	TRB, JUD, FIN
02/26/20	(H)	JUD AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
02/26/20	(H)	<Bill Hearing Canceled>
03/03/20	(H)	TRB AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE CHUCK KOPP
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, introduced HB 287.

MICHAEL NEMITH

Public Safety Coordinator
Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided information and answered questions during the hearing on HB 287.

KEN TRUITT, Staff
Representative Chuck Kopp
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented a sectional analysis for HB 287 on behalf of Representative Kopp, prime sponsor.

WILL MAYO, Chair
Village Public Safety Officer Tribal Grantee Caucus
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 287.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:06:21 AM](#)

CHAIR TIFFANY ZULKOSKY called the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting to order at 8:06 a.m. Representatives Talerico, Edgmon, Lincoln, Ortiz, Kopp, and Zulkosky were present at the call to order.

HB 287-VILLAGE PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER GRANTS

[8:07:12 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 287, "An Act requiring background investigations of village public safety officer applicants by the Department of Public Safety; relating to the village public safety officer program; and providing for an effective date."

[8:07:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CHUCK KOPP, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HB 287 with a PowerPoint presentation, entitled "HB 287 Village Public Safety Officer Program Updates." As shown on slide 3, he said the proposed legislation began in 2019, based on the efforts of a Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) work group ("work group") created on May 9, 2019, by Representative Edgmon, Speaker of the House, and Senator Giessel, Senate President, in response to the recruitment and

retention crisis of VPSOs in rural Alaska. Shortly after the VPSO work group was formed, Representative Kopp imparted, U.S. Attorney General William Barr issued his public safety crisis declaration for rural Alaska. Representative Kopp listed others in the work group: Co-chair Senator Olson, Senator Shower, Senator Bishop, Representative Rauscher, Representative Edgmon, and himself, and stated that there had been community meetings from Bethel to Kotzebue, including a community listening session in the Northwest Arctic Borough hosted by Representative Lincoln. He said U.S. Attorney General Schroder also joined the work group in Bethel. There were listening sessions at the Tanana Chiefs Conference, at the Tribal Unity Conference, and others, as well as a meeting with the Department of Public Safety (DPS) leadership team, in which Kelly Howell was present. Representative Kopp said that DPS had made it clear the mission for the program must be laid out by the legislature.

8:11:44 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP related that the VPSO program ("the program") was created in the 1970s for the protection of life and property and has evolved into a primary public safety role. He said the program has 10 entities that operate VPSO grants. Those entities, [as shown on slide 2], are: Chugachmiut, Copper River Native Association, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Kodiak Area Native Association, Kawerak Northwest Arctic Borough Association of Village Council Presidents, Bristol Bay Native Association, Tanana Chiefs Association, and Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. Representative Kopp noted that eight of those entities are regionally based non-profit corporations whose missions are to cultivate self-determination among their tribal citizens as they deliver public safety services; one is a federally recognized tribe; and the Northwest Arctic Borough - a home rule regional government seated in Kotzebue, Alaska, is the only grantee organization that is also a municipal government.

8:12:52 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP reported that "the past decade has seen shrinking numbers of VPSOs," with significant difficulty in recruitment and retention. He said in response, recommendations were made, [shown on slides 6-10]. He talked about activities [shown on slides 4 and 5]. There was a listening session with DPS; a listening session with the VPSO grantee organizations management personnel; the Northwest Arctic Borough's Public Safety Commission meeting; the Tribal Unity Caucus' annual

meeting; a meeting at the Anchorage Legislative Information Office (LIO) to review the draft report; and, finally, the adoption of the report at a meeting in Juneau. Co-chair activities included an Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) Council for the Advancement of Alaska Natives committee pre-convention planning meeting; an AFN annual convention panel focusing on rural public safety; a U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) rural public safety listening session in Nome; and a meeting with grantee organizations and VPSO management personnel.

8:14:54 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP moved on to slide 6 on VPSO working group long-term recommendations. Regarding the work group's continued work with federal partners, and especially with regard to training, with formal recognition tribes may be able to access federal law enforcement training programs; also, federal partners can create greater recurring funds for public safety. Representative Kopp related that another long-term recommendation of the work group was the passing of a state version of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA). If the ISDEAA were to be passed, he continued, the state could formally compact with tribes and offer the maximum amount of program design/redesign/financial flexibility for the various VPSO grantees. The third recommendation was to consider upward mobility for VPSO positions, either through compacting or state statutory changes or both, for the purpose of providing for different levels of VPSO personnel related to levels of training, the highest VPSO level being equivalent in function, training, and pay to an Alaska State Trooper ("trooper"). The last recommendation listed by Representative Kopp was to work to define the true cost of providing operational public safety services throughout rural Alaska.

8:19:04 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP addressed slides 7-10, the short-term work group recommendations, of which there were nine. Recommendation 1 was to update the VPSO statutes to provide a clear law enforcement and public safety vision and mission for the program and to provide VPSO personnel clear law enforcement duties and powers. This recommendation exists due to how the VPSO program has evolved, he explained, from a life safety program that emphasized search and rescue and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)-type functions and support, to an agency that handles

everything up to violent assaults, sexual assaults, drownings, and homicides. The VPSO, or "boots on the ground," is often on the scene days before a trooper is able to arrive, a function of Alaska's massive size, Representative Kopp added. He also brought up the fact that two VPSOs from Representative Edgmon's district were killed in the line of duty while performing "gun calls," integral acts of public safety, reinforcing the importance of VPSOs' job duties.

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP informed the committee that recommendation 2 of the work group's short-term recommendations was to create more financial flexibility for the VPSO grantee organizations in the updated VPSO statutes. With the grants at times being very restrictive in language regarding what money was available for which public safety mission, he explained that delivering a public safety service is not only just pay, and the labor to do the job, but about training, travel, fuel to heat homes, fuel for transportation, equipment needed, and housing. The interpretation of how the grant funds had been distributed had been restrictive, and a lot of funding had been left unspent because it was deemed to be not directly related to the mission as spelled out in statute.

[8:23:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP went on to recommendation 3, restoring VPSO funding to fiscal year 2018 (FY 18) levels: \$3 million was vetoed out of the VPSO program for the reason that the money was unspent. Through committee meetings and meeting with grantee organizations and all partnerships involved, the work group realized that the reason the funds were unspent was that there were so many denials of requests to utilize money in the public safety mission.

[8:24:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ asked what those amounts would be if funding were to be restored to FY 18 levels.

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP replied that he thought the entire program was at \$11 million, and he reminded Representative Ortiz that the VPSO program was a line item in the DPS budget. He said that he thought \$8 or \$9 million went to grantees. He added that because of the work group, the money appropriated would be more fully utilized and there will not be such large carryover expenses unauthorized.

8:26:19 AM

CHAIR ZULKOSKY confirmed that the funding levels were still roughly \$2 million short of restoring to the FY 18 levels and funds had been misspent because there had been so many denials from DPS in issuing the funds to the grantees.

8:28:00 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP continued with slide 8, regarding the work group's short-term recommendations. Funding unfunded mandates is key in a partnership that provides public safety services because municipalities [which also provide public safety services] have human resources departments, information technology (IT) support, mechanic shops for municipal vehicles, and other such support. All costs are much more indirect when considering VPSO program unfunded mandates because it must be determined how to provide all these supports. He added that it is great that the state is able to partner with communities, and that it is the communities' desire that they have local government and local delivery of public safety services. The state's taking over and putting troopers in these positions would be a significant expenditure for the state in terms of benefits and retirement for employees, in addition to all of the indirect costs that the grantees support, while their partnership saves "untold millions of dollars."

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP related that recommendation 4, to fund the unfunded mandates, states that as much as possible, restrictive chains that say money cannot be appropriated for the services that are necessary to deliver the public safety mission must be removed. Recommendation 5, he continued, calls for updating the statutes so grant awards pay grantee organizations their full indirect costs, currently at 35 percent. Recommendation 6 of the work group's short-term recommendations, Representative Kopp continued, is to move financial grant management to the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED). The working group met with Commissioner Julie Anderson and Sandra Moller, who would oversee the grant. During the meeting, it was made known that the VPSO program would be able to be managed; there would be a learning curve, but the friction involved with the grants management portion would be lessened.

8:32:33 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP admitted that the legislature might be to blame for not updating VPSO statute to clearly define the role's

function. The question was whether the program could receive funding if acting outside the scope of statute. There was a "mission collision" of VPSOs being desperately needed to do what they do but working outside of the statutory authority, and troopers managing the grants and asking honest questions about whether they were authorized to fund certain expenditures. One public safety mission conflicted with another, and the relationship was harmed over time. The idea was not to cast blame, but to fix the problem, he added. Transparency was needed in grant management, he continued, as applicants did not have a sense of how much money was available to them, what would be appropriated, or why one applicant was authorized an expenditure while another was denied.

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP informed the committee that DCCED had a much more transparent grants management process, including notifying legislators when unexpanded block grant funds were in their area. He stated that the fact the financial grant management piece would be moved to DCCED is not indicative of grantees' unwillingness to partner with DPS; when it came to money management, DCCED is just a better entity.

[8:35:03 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked, with regard to restoring funding to FY 18 levels, about the significant amount of money that appeared to be unspent in the VPSO line item annually, and whether some of it was related to funding denials to VPSO grantees.

[8:35:54 AM](#)

MICHAEL NEMITH, Public Safety Coordinator, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, replied by saying that mid-year in a program such as the VPSO program, when the initial \$3 million was taken from the program, the budget would not have necessarily been at 50 percent spent. In the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association (APIA), it is most important that he hold money aside to ensure he is able to pay officers throughout the year. There have been denials in the past, he said, and there have been extremely late approvals. Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Tlingit & Haida) had requested supplemental funding for public safety office repair in one of their communities, and the request remained unanswered by DPS for four months before it was approved on the last day of the fiscal year. At that time Tlingit & Haida was told to "do what [it could]." Mr. Nemith reminded the committee that renovations

in Alaska, not to mention rural Alaska, are a timely process, so an approval on the last day of the fiscal year was unacceptable.

8:38:08 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP imparted that short-term recommendation 7 was to maintain operational advisory, training, and experience requirement oversight at DPS. The troopers are a statewide public safety agency and the VPSO program is a subset of that agency; the strong partnership needs to continue, Representative Kopp said. Recommendation 8 would call for the need within statute to create a tribal/grantee organization consultation process before DPS can significantly change training and experience requirements for the VPSOs, he stated. Remembering that all grantees are functioning tribal governments that have formed these non-profits to partner with the state to provide public safety, a concern is when significant changes would be introduced without speaking with them first, because the group is used to working together, checking in monthly and even weekly. Recommendation 9, finally, would make required revisions and place them in statute to operationalize the VPSO program and facilitate the grant management piece going to DCCED. Representative Kopp dismissed the criticism put forth that the VPSO program as a non-profit may not have capacity to follow through; he added that all that is needed is structural support.

8:42:36 AM

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON added that the work group was structured initially to come back with a set of recommendations and then throughout the process realized that it was not going to be just one set of recommendations but an incremental process; that the program, which has been languishing, would need to be restructured.

8:43:50 AM

KEN TRUITT, Staff, Representative Chuck Kopp, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Kopp, prime sponsor of HB 287, indicated that the grantee organizations recommended changes with the overall intent to create financial and program flexibility, design and redesign authority, and more localized solutions.

MR. TRUITT gave a sectional analysis. He referenced HB 287, Section 1, which relates to recommendation 8, the consultation

process, and addresses a change that was made without consenting any of the organizations. Section 2 also relates to background checks having once been conducted by DPS, which unilaterally stopped with no notice given to grantee organizations. Sections 1 and 2 put into place the mechanism by which background checks can be done by DPS for the VPSO program. Any state program that requires national background checks can be found in the statute in Section 1, he added. Section 2 is the requirement that DPS authorize and pay for background check recommendations.

[8:47:26 AM](#)

MR. TRUITT continued his analysis with page 3, Section 3. It has been proposed that the existing VPSO statute be repealed and reenacted, he related, and contain all nine of the aforementioned recommendations, but specifically recommendation 9 itself, which was to take the existing regulations that DPS has for the program and use them as a starting point for the legislation. One may compare the existing statute for the VPSO duties (on the left hand side of the chart in members' packets), which were highly limited when compared with the state trooper duties, which were much more specific actions and powers, as outlined in statute (on right side of chart). One could be flexible with VPSO program management, or very restrictive. With the passage of HB 287, duties and functions of VPSO coordinators would be laid out much more clearly and distinctly. He said VPSOs are listed in statute as being peace officers alongside state troopers, but more of a mirroring of state trooper functions is desired when describing the functions of VPSOs.

[8:51:01 AM](#)

MR. TRUITT moved on to page 4, subsection (b), which mostly mirrors the existing subsection (b) of the current VPSO statute, the difference being that the reference to the commissioner of DCCED is there, as well as specific references to federally recognized tribes. He explained that this is an acknowledgment that the statute is an artificial creation; that the grantee organizations are "non-profits"; and specific references to recognized tribes make the statute reflect reality.

[8:52:58 AM](#)

MR. TRUITT said that subsection (d) on page 5, line 9, is from existing DPS regulation 13 AAC 96.030. With regard to funding unfunded mandates, Mr. Truitt related that the regulations

specifically had an indemnification provision that required the grantee organizations to indemnify the state. Furthermore, he said he used to have to sign the agreement when he had been Chief Operating Officer at Tlingit & Haida and thought it "backwards" that the state had to be indemnified during the performance of a state public safety function.

MR. TRUITT continued with subsection (e), which comes from existing regulations 13 AAC 96.040 and 050. This is still being looked at, he stated, and more recommendations may come in the next version of HB 287. Subsection (f) comes from 13 AAC 96.040, and the intent is to expand as to not be so prescriptive that there is only one VPSO per village but to give flexibility for the organizations to receive funding and put in villages as many VPSOs as they deem appropriate. He added that subsection (g) addressed these concerns as well.

MR. TRUITT addressed page 6, subsection (i), which is nearly identical to subsection (c) of the existing statute, the difference being on line 19 the rulemaking or regulation adopting authority will be in consultation with the grant recipients. Lines 23 and 24 are highlighted because this is the only place in statute where it is delineated DPS and trooper interaction will continue as it has been.

[8:57:18 AM](#)

MR. TRUITT moved on to page 7, subsection (k), which, as he pointed out, is a brand new concept relating to short-term recommendation 2, providing more flexibility. The negotiated contract language therein is that approvals will not be unreasonably withheld. Requests for funding will not be held back unless they do not in any way conform to the program. A grant recipient may use funding for anything reasonably related to public safety and VPSO duties, under the suite of statutes. Subsections (l) and (m) are the consultation recommendations, which will be very familiar to tribes as they come from orders and memorandums ("memos") from the executive branch of the federal government with which tribes are familiar.

MR. TRUITT moved on to Section 4, on page 8, which comes from the current VPSO qualifications and regulations. On page 8, lines 17-21, in terms of qualifications, felonies were a lifetime ban. As it currently stands, he pointed out, the lifetime ban is only a felony against a person. Other felonies, such as controlled substances, have a 10-year window.

9:00:27 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP pointed out that there is a recruitment and retention crisis in rural Alaska, where the incidents of domestic violence per capita is very high. The question the working group faced was whether to consider a lifetime ban on someone who had committed a misdemeanor but whom community leaders trusted and deemed qualified to do the job and whom village elders and tribal councils considered a person rehabilitated, having demonstrated good conduct, lack of criminal behavior, good community service, and to be of sound character. If a person has had no convictions within 10 years, HB 287 states, and the nature of the conviction happened to have been drug- or alcohol-related in nature, a person would still be eligible for consideration. Representative Kopp stressed the importance of returning power to local communities as well as allowing folks to "redeem their past and secure their futures." The heart of HB 287, he added, is to allow villages and tribes to recognize their people who have meaningfully pursued a new path forward.

9:03:43 AM

MR. TRUITT continued with page 9, section 25, pertaining to background investigations, which came directly from DPS regulation 13 AAC 96.090, and also reflects a unilateral change that was made by DPS regarding hours worked. In line 30, 650 hours represented going through the trooper academy. The rest of the training reflects all of the functions men and women are currently doing, and recognizes the training that they have. Mr. Truitt related that when he had been in charge of Tlingit & Haida all VPSOs had received the same amount of training as troopers.

MR. TRUITT continued with page 11, firearms training, DPS regulation 13 AAC 96.100. He added that VPSO certification on line 4 and denial revocation on line 15 are also from the regulations. Closing out by speaking on the transition provisions, he said: Section 5 is the authority DCCED needs to manage the grant; Section 6 is the grandfather provision for existing VPSO personnel that might be in the field without the training in HB 287 but with different training from when they were first hired; and Section 7 is specific instruction to DPS that the current interactions that happen between DPS and troopers would continue to happen. The bill proposes that grants management takes effect July 1, 2020, and the rest take effect immediately.

[9:07:12 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked, regarding page 5, lines 23-26, whether Mr. Truitt could address the functionality of how the provision's language would work in practice for VPSO programs in terms of creating standards for the number of eligible positions within a particular region.

[9:07:50 AM](#)

MR. TRUITT deferred to the department to answer the question. Notwithstanding that, he said, "I don't know that it's clear to the VPSO organizations." He said that currently it is not clear how many VPSOs will be granted based on how many are requested through an application.

[9:08:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP reiterated the intent of HB 287 is to create more flexibility so that recipients could use the VPSO for other villages also in their region, whether it is to support another VPSO or respond to an incident outside of the immediate village. One could receive a grant tying a VPSO to more than one village, he added. It could be that villages are ultimately named in grants, he stated. Northwest Arctic Borough has 10 villages served by grants, he stated, so maybe every grant would have all 10 named, and that way the VPSO would be able to be deployed where needed. VPSOs have gone from Southeast to Northwest Arctic Borough to help, which is one reason HB 287 wants to make clear VPSOs have commonly recognized peace officer powers in statute.

[9:11:16 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY added that there seemed to be a values clash between the grantees that were operating the VPSO program on the ground and how it was being managed on the DPS level, and that it would be a shame to create more ambiguity that could potentially restrain the addition of staff in communities that are larger. In her district, she added, there are villages of 300 and villages of 700 or 1000 people, which may require additional VPSO staffing. She wanted to make sure the passage of HB 287 would not unintentionally limit or restrain programs to one individual per community.

[9:12:26 AM](#)

MR. TRUITT replied that more flexible language for that particular provision was in the works and would give grantee organizations the ability to move personnel.

[9:13:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TALERICO asked for an explanation of the budget, including administrative costs, on page 5, line 4, and whether it needed to be expanded to ensure a clear definition thereof.

[9:14:43 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP replied that the intent behind HB 287 is to provide maximum flexibility, because each region has different needs. He said DCCED has one-size-fits-all grant application forms outlining what is and is not permitted, and it is certainly the intent of HB 287 that every need be identified within the budget.

[9:17:29 AM](#)

WILL MAYO, Chair, Village Public Safety Officer Tribal Grantee Caucus, said that after meeting for two and a half years the VPSO Tribal Caucus always came back to the same problem of the law being too restrictive. At times, the caucus had been permitted to try things out, and things were working, but they would be brought back on a short leash because of the law. Mr. Mayo added that he also served as executive director for the Alaska Tribal Unity Caucus, a statewide intertribal advocacy organization that has also submitted a resolution in support of HB 287.

MR. MAYO told the committee that he was a citizen of the Native village of Tanana, a former Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Corporation Chief Executive Officer, and a tribal chief. The duties of tribal chief often dealt with issues of public safety, he said. Mr. Mayo was employed as a school janitor and served as a volunteer search and rescue pilot. As a community leader, he often had to pinch hit with regard to law enforcement. He imparted that he has been called into active shooter situations in the early hours of the morning, has confronted burglaries in progress, and has dealt with issues that would come up in the absence of law enforcement. Mr. Mayo was able to confront the active shooter and talk him down unharmed, convincing him to hand over both his rifle and his children. Mr. Mayo delivered the shooter's children to their

grandmother and took possession of the rifle that had been pointed at him. He informed the committee that these types of occurrences were "all too common."

9:21:24 AM

MR. MAYO has been involved with the VPSO program from the beginning, he stated. He said he remembered troopers, and then constables, coming out, and then the VPSO program around 1980. A lot of local men and a few local women, Native members of the village, hired on, he said. It made sense to have local people who had their own homes and transportation, and in the 1980s there were 17 officers, almost all Native community members, he related. There were one or two outsiders at first, he continued, who were greatly esteemed by the community, but soon all local folks were burned out by the job's stresses and they could not continue.

MR. MAYO said that advertisements were put out for outside recruits, but those recruits had to be told there was no housing except for temporary places not big enough for families, and there would be no running water or sewer, only an oil stove. Outside recruits would also have to be informed that there was no holding cell available and no backup. Pay was not competitive with the Anchorage Police Force or the Alaska State Troopers. In the Tanana Chiefs Conference region, there are 34 communities. Currently four officers are employed with one more in the works, he added. Four villages have a house, a holding cell, and an office space, and that is where the four VPSOs currently are, he explained. This is not a coincidence, he added.

9:25:36 AM

MR. MAYO related that there are 28 villages with no available housing, 10 of which have offices. Ten have holding cells; 14 do not, he related. When someone is arrested and there is no home, office, or holding cell, a place must be found in which the prisoner may be supervised, not left alone for more than 15 minutes. The troopers will know but they may be called away, so the person holding the prisoner may be tasked with keeping the prisoner and him/herself safe for days. The prisoner may be secured to a bench, he offered, and must be fed, given water, and given bathroom breaks, all while the person holding the prisoner cannot sleep, because you have a prisoner and you are responsible.

MR. MAYO explained that some volunteers in the village may bring food or otherwise help, and the person responsible for the prisoner could get some sleep when the trooper came in with a plane to get the prisoner. There might be another call right at that moment, however, he stated, leading to extreme fatigue and exhaustion. Mr. Mayo related that the villages do not have even the rudimentary depictions of police in cowboy movies, and that even as a child he knew what basic law enforcement facilities would look like. He stated that that needed to be improved upon.

[9:28:27 AM](#)

MR. MAYO told the committee that if someone shows interest in the position from the Lower 48, and due diligence is done to ensure that person is not bringing unnecessary problems to the villages, and the person is hired on, it has happened that the person has turned and walked away upon seeing the conditions. One VPSO, after training, quit to work with the University of Fairbanks because he got a better deal, and it is likewise very hard to retain VPSOs to the point where money given to the program is turned away because it is so difficult to determine what to do with it, Mr. Mayo said. He asked committee members rhetorically what they would do [if dealt] these cards. The program is structured so rovers could move around, which DPS allowed for a while, until someone realized the law did not permit it, and the VPSO was yanked back. Mr. Mayo reiterated that there were 34 villages with no facilities.

MR. MAYO told the committee that if he could, he would take HB 287 and put it under his pillow so he could sleep well. When he read HB 287 and realized there could be flexibility in the program and how money was spent, he said he was able to determine right then that it would be manageable. He added that there are key aspects therein that have made compacting a glowing success for tribes and tribal organizations all over the nation, but especially in Alaska, where public safety is even more of a challenge than other places. Mr. Mayo urged the committee to support HB 287.

[HB 287 was held over.]

[9:33:01 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting was adjourned at 9:33 a.m.